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# homemakers' chat

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U. S. DEPARTMENT  
OF AGRICULTURE

Wharton--6009

U. S. Department of Agriculture

Wednesday, March 3, 1943.

Subject: "VICTORY GARDENS FOR BEGINNERS AND BUSY PEOPLE." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry, U.S. Department of Agriculture.

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Let's assume that you're one of the many homemakers who haven't tried gardening before. You have always bought your vegetables at the grocery store... or from a farmer or peddler who came to your door. Maybe you live in a small town.... or in the suburbs of a city.... or even in the heart of a city. You'd like to respond to Secretary of Agriculture Wickard's recent call for all people to raise Victory Gardens this year.

You decide that you have a suitable plot.... a nice sunny backyard.... or a vacant lot down the street.... or a plot not far away in a "community garden", and you want some pointers on getting started and going on. Perhaps you're not only a beginner at gardening. You're also one of those busy people who work all day in an office or a plant, and you plan to do your gardening before and after work. As far as that goes.... you needn't hesitate to try gardening if you have reasonably good soil and a sunny plot. Plant scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture say that an hour a day of regular attention should take care of a small home garden.

The first thing to do is to write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C., for a copy of the free 1943 Victory Garden bulletin. You'll need this for handy reference all through the season. Meantime, here are a few highlights from the vegetable specialists of the Department of Agriculture,

Make sure the plot you choose for your garden has plenty of sunshine. If your plot does not get sun for 6 hours of the day, you can't raise vegetables. Then you need good fertile, moist soil. Experienced gardeners say, "If weeds



grow rank on the land, it is a safe bet that the soil is fertile." That rule holds good for soil that isn't too wet.

Plan your garden on paper. The Victory Garden leaflet just mentioned gives several plans for gardens of different sizes. The smallest one is 30 by 50 feet, but you can have an even smaller garden if you haven't that much space. Of course, you'll want to plant vegetables the family likes. But give some thought also to vegetables that supply the most food value.... particularly vitamins and minerals. In a very small garden you won't have room enough for potatoes and corn... even if you'd like to try growing them. However, you may get around that difficulty by swapping vegetables with a neighbor who grows plants you don't have.

You'll need to find out one or two things from more experienced gardeners in your locality, or from your county agricultural agent. For example, you want to know which vegetables, and which varieties of those vegetables, grow best where you live. You want to know also which varieties resist the diseases and insects common in your section. You could plan to have 10 or 15 kinds of vegetables from among the following:

Lettuce, cabbage, kale, turnip greens, chard, collards, and spinach, among the leafy vegetables.... turnips, parsnips, beets, carrots, or rutabagas among the root vegetables.... also tomatoes, bush and pole beans, limas, peas, onions, radishes, cucumbers, and squash. Plan also for second and third crops to go in after the early vegetables are over.

Another point about planning your garden: If it's level, run the rows lengthwise. If the ground slopes, run them around, not up and down the slope. Put the tall plants on the north or west side so they won't shade the low ones. Put the first plantings of small, early vegetables on the south and east. Then they'll grow fast and be easy to cultivate. They'll also be easy to replace



when their growth is over.

Plow up the ground if you can. If not, spade it thoroughly. Work in plenty of leaf mold and manure, or get commercial fertilizer. Your dealer will sell you a special Victory Garden Fertilizer if you tell him what you want it for. This fertilizer comes in 5-, 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-pound packages.

There's a way of spreading commercial fertilizer so it won't touch the seeds. Use a hoe to make a furrow about 2 inches deep and 3 or 4 inches wide, parallel to the line where you will plant your seeds, but at least 2 inches away from that line. Spread the fertilizer uniformly along this furrow. Cover it about 2 inches deep with soil. You can broadcast fertilizer easier than to put it on carefully in bands, but you waste fertilizer doing so, and fertilizer is precious this year.

Many gardeners waste seed by sowing it too thickly or too deep. If you sow too thickly you'll have to thin later on. If you plant too deep, the vegetables will be slow coming up. Either way you waste seed and labor. The Victory Garden bulletin will help you in your planting problems also.

When it comes to cultivating the garden, plan to keep weeds down by shallow hoeing, especially after a rain. This leaves the surface soil in good condition so it will absorb any later rainfall. The plant scientists say to hoe or cultivate only often enough to keep weeds out. Extra hoeing does not help... may even harm tender roots.

As for watering, soak the soil thoroughly and deeply, the way a heavy rain soaks it. They you won't need to water again until the soil begins to look dry. Frequent light sprinkling is bad. It waters the roots of shallow-growing weeds, and doesn't give the garden plants enough water to count. Mulching with straw, leaves, or dried lawn clippings helps conserve moisture and keep down weeds.

Well, there you have a number of points about gardening to start you off on your project. In addition to the Victory Garden bulletin, you might like to send for two others when you write to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.... Send for a bulletin called "Diseases and Insects of Garden Vegetables", and another called "Disease-Resistant Varieties of Vegetables for the Home Garden."

